

## **NOME ALASKA 2017**

Our trip this year to the AKAU Lodge in Nome was the trip of a lifetime for not only myself, but also for many in our club. Some of us worked that ground till it gave up a smiling face in their pans. Others took their time to run those metal finding gadgets we call a metal detector, digging out of the ground each prospective object that gave us a beep or buzz to lure us under that surface layer of dirt. Dig and dig we were hungry to get down to the bottom of what was causing that buzzing sound. Some found yellow gold, some found that there had been a hunter shooting a .22 caliber rifle. One of the treasures that I was tempted to chase that buzzing sound was a nail that came from a mule shoe which had a longer head that gave it the same traction power as the studs in our tires do for us when driving on ice or snow.

One of our club members had taken on the position of being one of the Cooks at the Lodge and had the longest stay in the gold camp. Limited time off gave her the chance to experience what prospecting in Alaska was all about.

As one of the cooks, we owe Sharon a big THANKYOU for taking a part in keeping us all fed well and for keeping that hot coffee ready to warm us up.

Our President Debbie Witcher had her hands full with keeping everyone satisfied in going the directions we wanted to go for each activity that was available. We had The Trips off to the beach looking for the NOME Beach Glass, down to the Highbankers for gold, out fishing to catch salmon, the long drive to the Eskimo Village up north. Then the metal detector people had to be satisfied too. With Augie and Debbie working together they had their hands full trying to keep each facet of this trip addressed. Betty and Tony were constantly planning meals for the group and working in time to guide groups of us in different directions hoping to show us all that Alaska had to share. There was So much to see and so little time. But all of the time was well spent, still leaving a hunger to return for more.

Fishing was on the top of my list to experience and thanks to Augie's special recipe fish eggs, I was astounded to see fish biting within 20 seconds of my bait hitting to water. My roommate bragged about catching over 100 fish on one of his trips to the river.

Many of you may know that my trip was a much longer stay than most which gave me the chance to experience what Nome was really like. While there, I met a friendly world of people as like I have never seen in the lower 48 states. Everywhere you drive, ride or walk there was always a friendly wave hello.

While fishing there, I had the honor of helping a young lady catch her first salmon, helping her family all catch fish was a treasured experience.

There my chance to help in the program put together by Betty, Tony and the Mayor of Nome Richard Beneville to teach people from the cruise ship how to pan for gold. Seeing their faces glow when they saw the yellow in the bottom of their pans left as much a feeling as if I had just

found a nugget myself. Adding to their smile was the postcards that we taped their gold to so they could take that little bit of Alaska back to Florida with them.

I must extend my gratitude to all of the people at the AKAU Lodge who worked hard at making my stay such a pleasurable experience and to Debbie Witcher and Randy Harper in their effort to make this trip come together for everyone who had the chance to be there.

*While on my extended stay, I was able to travel off to the beaches West of Nome and gathered a few buckets of what is called Ruby Sand. The garnets in the sand lay hand in hand with fine granules of GOLD. I took those buckets back to camp and processed it down to a higrade paydirt. In Paying Forward the benefit of my experience, I will offer 7 oz of that higrade paydirt to the best story about their experience gained from the 2017 trip to the AKAU Lodge. That story/tale can be no longer than 333 words. **It must be submitted to be in the January Newsletter before January 4<sup>th</sup> to qualify for a chance at the paydirt.** All Tales/Stories should be sent to Mark [chipper49@outlook.com](mailto:chipper49@outlook.com) and [rickbeehler@ymail.com](mailto:rickbeehler@ymail.com)*

The rewards of my trip were not measured in the gold in my pan or nuggets that talked to my metal detector. The true rewards were from all of what Nome had to offer in the memories of a time not soon to be forgotten.

*Thank you One & All , Who helped create these memories.*

*Rockhound Rick*

**Pictures to go with the article**



**Ronda and Eli pulling his dredge in from the Bering Sea**



**Musk Ox at 30 feet**



**Alaskan Handicraft**







**Transportation while in Nome, it could get me anywhere I wanted to go.  
Loaded and headed to ship my packages South.**



**Helping load Eli's dredge out of the Bering Sea East of Nome.**





**Mayor Richard Beneville with Tony from AKAU, Giving the Cruise Ship people a chance to pan for Gold. Most of them were from Florida.**





**She asked HOW ARE YOU CATCHING SO MANY FISH, I gave her the chance to learn how and she caught a bigger fish than her husband! Thanks to Augie's magic egg recipe! Where were we? Out along the river!**



**Yes,, MineLab helped me! It pays to have a good grip on the fish!**





**It took TEAMWORK to process that pile of dirt. There was enough gold in that pile to make my detector beep.**





**Good times. Mayor Richard Beneville giving congratulations for a father raising two good sons who Richard was happy to meet.**



**The Potters showed me some of the sites as soon as I got off the plane.**



**The love of these dogs will carry them far when they run in the 2018 Iditarod.**





**A Tale about the Cremation of Sam McGee.**



**Attentive listeners to Mayor Richard Benevilles rendition of the Tale of the Cremation of Sam McGee.**



**All listeners to the Tale of Poor old cold Sam McGee in Alaska.**





**The digging was much easier than when done in the 1800s. Notice that even the mules were replaced!**



**This was sometime around 3 AM, after it finally got dark. That fisherman speeding by kind of blurred my picture.**





**Those dark brown spots at 2 o'clock above the tall building are Musk Ox. At times they graze in the blueberries between that small shack and the AKAU Lodge.**





**The season to dredge can be short depending a lot of the weather. These are all dredges working all the hours they can to try to cover expenses.**



**Yes, the young Bull is marking his territory early, I don't think the Old Man of the herd is worried yet. This was taken from the porch outside of the AKAU Kitchen.**





**Fantastic photos are everywhere to be captured as a memory of that special moment in time.**